

Miyamoto clarifies "mature" Mario and talks about his thoughts on the PS2, Mario becoming "kiddie" and more.



Itoi: It doesn't matter how much he speaks, I never get tired of hearing what Miyamoto-san has to say. This is the fourth part in our incredibly rare interview with Shigeru Miyamoto, who continued to speak way past the originally scheduled time. The rumor is that the next Mario is going to be a bit of a departure, let's find out how.

Miyamoto: They say the Mario game (*Editor's Note: He's talking about the game being developed for Dolphin that was known as "Mario 128"*) we're currently developing is more adult than usual. But putting it that way is a bit off base.

I've never been a fan of what I call "Doraemon-like Story Development." That's not to say that I dislike Fujiko-san. I think it's incredible that he created such a product, but the print media use a lot of this base pink color. They say that's a color that young elementary schoolers are fond of. Apparently kids of about that age range have a much easier time recognizing that color. Hearing that I think to myself, "That's just not right!"

They didn't make the character and say, "OK, what kind of design, what kind of color would fit this character?" I don't like it that the marketing came first and the color was chosen based on that. And so due to these limitations, Doraemon became more and more geared towards younger people. I didn't like that. And before I knew it, Mario was following a similar pattern. As more entries in the series were added, I feel like, because we have more people making the Mario

games - younger people on our staff making the games, and outside companies licensing Mario, that as a character he started going in that direction more and more. And even Nintendo marketing began to say, "Let's position Mario as a character aimed at small children," and it was established. Even in comics he became more aimed at young elementary school children.



I created Mario when I was 27 years old. At that point in time he was in no way something that I would feel embarrassed about - I mean, he was already this older guy, like your uncle or something! (Laughs) It was meant to be the kind of game that 18 year old guys would be able to play together and enjoy, so I felt this disconnect when he started being forced into this more elementary school focused, narrowed role. If, for instance, you're talking about Yoshi in a product like Yoshi's Story, it makes sense to narrow the target age group for that, and I think that's fine, but for me, I felt like Mario was something a bit different. So I feel like I want to bring it back to that point, that I don't want to limit the age group of the game from our end.

We also thought that we'd like to take the design and all of the game related graphics and improve them a bit. First off - that he doesn't give the peace sign. Also that he isn't always smiling and laughing too much for no good reason. About that "peace sign ban," that's something I've been saying for a looong time. (Laughs) Our Tezuka-san, he likes that so he's put it in the games from the beginning, but in the later games it's permeated too much - to the point where when you think Mario you think that, "He's the guy that gives the peace sign for his winning pose." So I'm saying now, let's get rid of that sooner rather than later.

Well, and part of the source of that is that Nintendo is generally said to be "kiddie." But even if that's a promise we want to keep to our audience, I don't think it means at all that making Mario

do the peace sign is going to bring in the kids. I dunno, maybe the company being in Kyoto is another detriment.

I was already thinking about that for Mario 64, and although we renovated the design not everybody saw it that way. Even on the dev side, things kind of went back to the way they were as time passed.

"Once kids get into middle school they tend to "graduate" from Nintendo." That image surfaced more or less recently, right? That didn't use to be the case. Don't you think? And now people ask - "Is Nintendo narrowing their target audience to elementary schoolers when developing games?" I always say that that's not the case, but I think that the fact that people think that to begin with is already a problem. I mean, that's why this "graduation" image came about.



All right, let's say that we go against the flow and try to force the middle schoolers back into our direction - that's not going to help. Even if we're not constantly focused only on getting back the players that left us, we still currently have all these people that support Nintendo. So now, if we continue to make the kinds of games where those elementary schoolers that are playing our games don't get the urge to leave us, they'll still be Nintendo players when they've hit that middle school "graduation age" in five years. We have to look at that kind of range. They tend to say that based on market research data, that compared to a competitor's product Nintendo has a certain image, and we should put on some veneer to cultivate some current market trends. But even if we can change our advertisements and the look of our product on the turn of a dime, you can't just change how a product is developed in a short span - you'll lose focus. And money.

During an interview on this last trip to Europe I was asked, "How do you feel about the PS2 coming out?" and what I've been saying is that, "Even if I start talking about how the Dolphin is gonna be so much more powerful, you're just going to think I'm eating sour grapes, right?" (Laughs) There's nothing you can do if they're just going to take it that we're trying to show off. That's why I've answered several people by saying that we're playing on a different field.

I mean, even during the 64 era, we didn't feel like we were in a console war. But even now everyone wants a fight. Since it's a business it's natural that each competitor keeps bringing out new products to best the other, and I do think it's good that the game business as a whole prospers from that. But, and I've been saying this since before, but if you want a fight, then you should just be making different software titles against your competitors on the same piece of hardware. Though I bet that if anyone said that they were thinking about that everyone would call it a "declaration of war." (Laughs)

What I'm trying to realistically imagine right now is what things are going to be like in five years. I think we absolutely need a vision for what Nintendo, or even better the industry is going to be like five years from now. I'm sure our CEO is thinking about it, too. And that's definitely not something you can talk about based on competing with specs alone. And so during our Europe trip, I mentioned that as I continue working my job day to day, I'm thinking about what Nintendo is going to be like in five years. I mean, it's the truth. (Laughs)

That's not because I'm trying to confuse people, but because I don't know whether I'll still be big at that point in time, but will I be standing on my own two feet in five years? What will I be making in five years? What will game hardware be like then? Will game hardware be driven out by PCs? All right, then will home game consoles end with this generation? These are the kinds of things I think about.

So "they" say all these different things, but I think "they" miss the point with what they're talking about.



I think we've gotten past the point where it would have been just a temporary fad, that we've passed the point of penetration where everyone would get bored with it and it would just die out. So we're past the scale of something like "Tamagotchi," where they're saying, "What does the maker do once that boom is over?" So if you ask me what I think about PS2, that's one of the many different answers that are possible, that it's just a another blip in history. So it's our job to make sure that Nintendo doesn't fall into complete irrelevance.

Thinking of it that way, right now it's clear that there is no wonder in games. Or I guess that the only wonder comes from the graphics, though minute. (Laughs) So games may be providing some of that wonder, but it's a problem for us that lately the PlayStation seems to be providing more of that. And if you ask yourself whether the makers of the PlayStation clearly see that - I'd say that they don't. The fact that Nintendo can in each generation, provide the comprehensive hardware and software package is our strength, and what makes us fun. As such, it follows that having the CEO focus on talking about "the next high-spec game console" wouldn't be Nintendo-like. It wouldn't be any fun. Our CEO, he's quick. (Laughs) He totally gets it. Even though he never plays games at all. (Laughs)

Itoi: I'm so pleased that I get to deliver an interview so rich in content to my audience. I'm gonna have to pat myself on the back this time. So - how did you enjoy part four of Shigeru Miyamoto Speaks? Next time we'll finally get to discussion about the rumored high spec game console - Dolphin. Although details around the system are top secret, we found out everything we could - and we're saving it for next time! We hope you look forward to it!